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DE RUEHUJA #3071/01 3330826
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 290826Z NOV 06
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7904
INFO RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 5617
RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RHFMISS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ABUJA 003071

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [ELTN](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA PLAGUED BY FAILING ROAD NETWORK

REF: A) LAGOS 1320 B) ABUJA 2434 C)ABUJA 1959 D) ABUJA 1083

¶1. Summary. Nigeria's road-transportation network has deteriorated badly following decades of neglect, almost no maintenance, and severely deficient funding. Nigeria has recognized for decades the need to improve its roads but so far has failed to do so. A Central Bank survey found that most roads, especially in the south, were in very poor condition and required complete rehabilitation. This was largely true of roads in the north, while those especially in the southeast were terrible. Some roads built more than 30 years ago had never been rehabilitated. Septel will address Nigeria's recent initiatives to improve roads. End summary.

Steady Decrease in Spending on Roads

¶2. Nigeria formerly possessed a road network that was above average for West Africa. As the Government of Nigeria (GON) reduced and then almost eliminated funding for road maintenance, the condition of roads declined markedly. Between 1975 and 1985 the GON spent the equivalent, in 1995 naira terms, of 924 billion naira (\$42.2 billion) on roads - an average of about \$4 billion per year. By the Ministry of Works' admission, government spending on roads then plummeted to an annual average of just 1 billion naira between 1986 and 1994. The severe deterioration in the nation's road network and the resulting economic costs concerned the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), which called poor roads a major trigger of cost-push inflation. The CBN's Research Department surveyed Nigeria's road network in 2003. Its findings remain valid today.

Survey Conclusions

¶3. The CBN found that most of Nigeria's roads, especially in the south, were in very poor condition and required complete rehabilitation. The same was largely true of roads in the north, while those especially in the southeast generally were terrible. Nationwide, some roads built more than 30 years before had never been rehabilitated, resulting in major cracks, depressions, numerous potholes, and broken-down bridges along most Nigerian roads. The shoulders of many roads had eroded, leaving some highways nearly impassable. Some roads required total rehabilitation and repaving.

¶4. The CBN found Nigeria's roads were plagued by broad problems, with major ones being faulty design, inadequate drainage systems, and a poor maintenance culture, which reduced the roads' utility significantly and made road transport slow and unsafe. Other problems included poor road construction, an inefficient highway bureaucracy, insufficient funding, and the overuse of roads due to a lack of functioning waterways and railroads.

Maintenance Is Badly Deficient

¶5. The Central Bank especially faulted the GON for having no program for road maintenance. Road-maintenance decisions were made at the ministry level and influenced by politics rather than need, leaving most of the country's roads neglected. Some of the few rehabilitation projects were not completed because contractors were not paid in full. Although large sums were spent on road construction, funding for maintenance lagged behind badly. From 1999 to 2002 the Ministry of Works received appropriated funding for fewer than 10% of its road-maintenance requests, and only 53.5% of the appropriated amount actually was released to the ministry.

The High Costs of Bad Roads

¶6. The CBN found these problems made it expensive and arduous for Nigerians to transport goods and services from producers to consumers, and agricultural produce from rural to urban centers. This led to a loss of man-hours and a high cost of goods and services. The CBN pronounced Nigeria's annual direct loss from bad roads at 80 billion naira (\$622.6 million in 2003 naira terms), while poor roads also produced higher vehicle-operating costs of 53.8 billion naira. The total annual cost of Nigeria's bad roads was 133.8 billion naira (\$1.04 billion in 2003 naira terms.) Unmeasured and indirect costs such as slow travel, man-hours lost in traffic, motorists' "emotional and physical trauma," and lower national productivity, further add to the toll.

Four Types of Nigerian Roads

¶7. The Central Bank used Ministry of Works figures putting Nigeria's

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road network at about 194,000 km (121,250 miles), with fewer than a third of these paved. The GON was responsible for 17% of roads, state governments for 16%, and local governments for 67%. Nigeria has four kinds of roads: Federal trunk "A" roads are built, owned, and maintained by the QN. Federal trunk "F" roads are former state roads taken over by the GON to upgrade to federal highway standards.

State trunk "R" roads are owned and managed by the states. Local government trunk "C" roads are owned and managed by local governments. Each level of government is responsible for planning, building, and maintaining roads under its jurisdiction.

South-South Zone

¶8. The CBN surveyed roads in Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. The country's South-South zone, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Delta, Bayelsa, and Rivers States, had a federal highway network of 4,151 km. Roads in this zone were in fairly good condition because of an ongoing rehabilitation program, but it was not carried out evenly, and Akwa Ibom and Cross River were largely neglected.

Southeast Zone

The states in the Southeast geopolitical zone, Anambra, Enugu, Imo, Ebonyi, and Abia, had a federal highway network of 3,122 km. Most of these roads were in very poor condition because of potholes, gullies, and erosion. The roads suffered a complete lack of maintenance and many had not been rehabilitated for more than 30 years. The Owerri-Onitsha highway was in very bad shape with gullies and ditches adorning its 90.5 km length. This produced very slow and unsafe traffic, with one trip taking up five to six hours on a bad day. The Owerri-Umuahia road was in bad condition, while the Enugu-Onitsha road needed rehabilitation badly because the road surface had peeled off, indicating poor-quality work. The Urnuahia-Bende road was being rehabilitated after part of it collapsed due to erosion.

Southwest Zone

The Southwest zone, Lagos, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti, and Ogun States, had a federal highway network of 4,162 km. The roads were in fairly good condition because of some repairs and rehabilitation carried out from 1997 to 2001. The Lagos-Ibadan divided highway was in fair condition but with significant potholes, and some of its road surface was peeling off.

Northwest Zone

The Northwest zone of Kaduna, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara States had a federal highway network of 6,363 km. These roads generally were in bad condition and required complete rehabilitation. The survey takers observed casual laborers filling in potholes with sand and straw in an attempt to make the roads passable. The Kano-Katsina route was a single-lane, 156-km road with many potholes. Large stretches of it were damaged by erosion because a lack of drainage. The Funtua-Yankara-Tsafe-Gusau-Zamfara stretch was a death trap because of its very deplorable condition. The Kano-Wudil road was in very good condition, while the Wudil-Kwanahukuma stretch had potholes.

Northeast Zone

The Northeast states of Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe had a federal highway network of 6,788 km. Most roads in this zone were contracted out for repairs but the jobs were not done properly. Repairs were abandoned halfway, so the Ministry of Works took over the work. Bad roads requiring urgent repair included the Bauchi-Gombe Yola, Bauchi-Tafa-Balewa-Langtang, and Bauchi-Ningi stretches of highway.

North-Central Zone

The North-Central states of Niger, Kwara, Plateau, Benue, Nasarawa, Kogi, and the Federal Capital Territory had a federal highway network of 9,756 km. The severe potholes on the Suleja-to-Mokwa stretch made it a death trap for motorists. Of the Akwanga-Makurdi roads, the Akwanga-to-Lafia route was dangerous because of very sharp bends, while the worst route was the 90-km stretch from Lafia to Makurdi because of its gully-like potholes. The roads between Abuja and Ilorin were in fair condition, but there were significant

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potholes between Abuja International Airport and Lokoja. Though only several years old, the Lokoja-Ilorin highway already had gone very bad with major potholes almost every kilometer, making travel unsafe.

Comment

19. Since the CBN completed its road survey, little change has occurred to Nigeria's road network except for further deterioration. Nigeria's different levels of government have recognized for decades the need to rebuild the country's road system - but they have taken little action. Septel will address the GON's recent, belated initiatives to carry out road improvements in Nigeria.